

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 RABAT 01458 171958Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----172050Z 089179 /73

P 171905Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1307

S E C R E T RABAT 1458

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR MILI MO SOPN
SUBJECT: U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES IN MOROCCO

REF: RABAT 1457

1. FOLLOWING IS REVISED PROPOSED PRESS GUIDANCE AS APPROVED
BY MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT ON MARCH 16 FOR USE BY PRESS SPOKESMEN
ON BOTH SIDES ON AN IF-ASKED BASIS ONLY.

2. QUOTE. Q. IS IT TRUE THAT WE ARE CLOSING OUR BASE IN
MOROCCO?

A. WE HAVE NOT HAD "BASES" IN MOROCCO SINCE THE EARLY 60'S,
WHEN WE EVACUATED OUR SAC SITES AT THE REQUEST OF KING HASSAN II.
WE HAVE MAINTAINED A SMALL COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY AND
SUPPORTING TRAINING COMMAND IN MOROCCO, IN THE CONTEXT OF
AMERICAN MILITARY AID TO THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO. WE ARE
CLOSING THEM BECAUSE OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS IN THE CONTEXT
OF OVERALL PROGRAMS AIMED AT SAVING MONEY. WE WILL BEGIN
A GRADUAL CLOSING OF THE FACILITIES JUNE 1, 1977 AND THEY WILL
BE COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN BY SEPTEMBER 30, 1978.

Q. ARE WE REPLACING THE CURRENT FACILITIES WITH ANY OTHER
KINDS OF "FACILITIES"?

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A. KING HASSAN THE SECOND, IN VIEW OF THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS
BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, HAS GRANTED AUTHORIZATION FOR THE
LOCATION IN MOROCCO OF AN ELECTRO-OPTICAL SPACE SURVEILLANCE
STATION. THIS STATION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE CLOSING OF
KENITRA. THIS WOULD BE MANNED WITH SCIENTIFIC PERSONNEL OF
ABOUT 45-50 PERSONS. NATURALLY THE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION IT

GENERATES WOULD BE PUT AT THE DISPOSITION OF THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT, AND SCIENTISTS IN MOROCCO COULD USE THE TELESCOPES FOR THEIR OWN SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY.

Q. THIS APPEARS TO BE A CUTBACK.. DOES IT SIGNAL SOME KIND OF CHILL IN OUR RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO?

A. DEFINITELY NOT. WE HAVE HAD VERY FRIENDLY UNBROKEN RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO FOR 200 YEARS AND THEY CONTINUE TO BE CLOSE. THIS CHANGE IS BEING MADE IN FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT.

Q. DO WE HAVE PLANS FOR OTHER INSTALLATIONS ON MOROCCAN SOIL?

A. NO. WERE THERE TO BE ANY SUCH NEED IN THE FUTURE, NATURALLY WE WOULD SEEK THE VIEWS OF THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT, AND CONSULT WITH THE CONGRESS, AS WE ARE IN THIS CASE.
END QUOTE.

3. IN SUGGESTING CHANGES, FOREIGN MINISTER LARAKI EXPLAINED THAT HE PREFERRED TO PLACE ANSWER TO QUESTION ONE IN THE CONTEXT OF OVERALL U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE, WHICH IS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN IN MOROCCO. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY MAY HAVE MADE OUR OWN COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES NO LONGER NECESSARY, BUT THAT THESE ADVANCES HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE NECESSITY FOR THE U.S.-OPERATED COMMUNICATIONS SCHOOL FOR WHICH MOROCCO HAS A CONTINUING NEED. HE REQUESTED ELIMINATION OF REFERENCES TO U.S. MILITARY SERVICES, AS WELL AS TO REDISTRIBUTION OF OUR

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PERSONNEL TO AVOID GIVING IMPRESSION U.S. DOWNGRADING MOROCCO BECAUSE OF "AREAS OF GREATER NEEDS". REGARDING THE ANSWER TO QUESTION TWO, LARAKI PREFERRED STRESS ON SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF GEODSS WITHOUT SPECIFIC MENTION OF "CIVILIAN" OR AIR FORCE PERSONNEL, ALTHOUGH HE, AS WAS THE CASE WITH KING HASSAN, HAD NO PROBLEM WITH THE MILITARY NATURE OF THE PROJECT. HE SUGGESTED MORE FORTHCOMING LANGUAGE ON U.S.-MOROCCAN COOPERATIVE ASPECTS OF GEODSS IN ORDER TO GIVE IT A MORE BILATERAL FLAVOR. WITH THESE CHANGES, LARAKI SAID WE COULD CONSIDER THE PRESS GUIDANCE FULLY APPROVED BY THE GOM.

4. COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW, THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT'S SUGGESTED CHANGES ARE WELL TAKEN AND REFLECT BASIC GOM SENSITIVITIES WHICH WE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. UNLESS INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE, WE AND GOM WILL PLAN TO USE THE FOREGOING IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS THAT MAY ARISE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INSTRUCTIONS, MILITARY BASES, THE PRESS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 17-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977RABAT01458
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770092-0232
Format: TEL
From: RABAT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770349/aaaabqpt.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: cb107db6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 RABAT 1457
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3076438
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES IN MOROCCO
TAGS: MARR, MILI, SOPN, MO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cb107db6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009